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ABSTRACT

This speech presents evidence that (1) aspirations for education and expectations are different phenomena, and (2) these two variables define subgroups out of a total student population. The data on which this paper is based are the responses to a group-administered questionnaire by 5632 junior and senior high school students in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 4-county metropolitan area. The subgroups classified as deviant were of two modes: (1) students whose expectations exceed their aspirations, and (2) students whose aspirations exceed their expectations. The authors contend that future attempts to predict and explain student educational achievement should take into account the complex nature of educational horizons. (Author/MLF)

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EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS: A DEVIANT CASE ANALYSIS

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Educational Expectations and Educational Aspirations:

A Deviant Case Analyses

Introduction

A variety of structural and social psychological variables have been employed to predict and explain educational achievement. Among the most salient social psychological characteristics in this type of research has been the respondents' educational horizons. Typically this generic variable has been operationalized as including one or a combination of aspirations, motivations, desires and expectations about future educational states (Bayer, 1968; Bordua, 1960; Haller, and Butterworth, 1960; Sewell, 1964; Sewell and Armer, 1966.) Some of the empirical literature suggests that these dimensions are interchangeable (Sewell and Shah, 1968). It is, however, reasonable to expect that those future states to which students aspire need not necessarily coincide with the future states they realistically expect to obtain.

If in fact we can empirically demonstrate a difference between individuals' aspirations and expectations, this difference would raise some question as to the

comparability of studies using a variety of different measures of educational horizons. Further, dimensions such as educational aspirations and educational expectations would need to be clearly differentiated in future studies attempting to predict and explain educational achievement.

In this paper we shall first demonstrate evidence to the effect that aspirations for education and expectations are different phenomena. Second, using the method of deviant case analysis we shall demonstrate that these two variables define subgroups of a total student population which are sufficiently different from one another to warrant serious consideration and analysis in future studies.

Data and Method

The data upon which this paper is based are the responses of 5632 junior and senior high school students in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, four-county metropolitan area to a group-administered questionnaire. The student respondents attended seven schools which represent a selection from suburban and rural communities in four school districts. The data were collected as part of a larger project during spring of the 1966-67 school year.

The variable of educational aspirations was operationally defined by asking students the question:

> What is the greatest amount of education you would like to having during your life?

The distribution of responses was:

1.	Graduate from College or more	60.4%
2.	Attend junior college, business school or obtain vocational training	23.2%
3.	Graduate from High School or less.	16.3%
		N=5565

Educational expectations was measured by asking:

> What is the greatest amount of education you realistically expect in your life?

The marginal distribution of this variable is:

1.	Graduate from college or more	48.6%
2.	Attend junior college, business college or obtain vocational training	25.5%
3.	Graduate from high school or less.	25.8%
		N=5548

The similarity in wording of these two questions and their proximity on the instrument (they appeared successively) should serve to maximize the likelihood that an individual's responses to both would be congruent. In addition, the concepts of dissonance and exchange would lead us to expect congruent responses to these two items. Even so, substantial incongruence of responses can be observed as demonstrated in Table 1.

TABLE I

The Relationship Between Aspirations and Expectations

Educational Aspirations	Educational Expectations			
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
LOW	53.1% (4)*	2.5% (3)	1.4% (1)	
MEDIUM	24.6% (5)	77.2% (4)	1.4% (2)	
HIGH	22.3% (7)	20.3% (6)	97.2% (4)	
	(1548)	(1291)	(2702)	N=5541

* Numbers in parentheses refer to the cell designations in our mode definitions (see figure 1).

As Table 1 indicates 19.8% of the respondents to these two items are incongruent. This surprisingly large percentage, when viewed in light of the disposition of our data toward congruence as noted above, suggests a difference between aspirations and expectations. The analysis of these 19.8% of the respondents (deviant cases) constitutes our deviant case analysis.

The deviant cases were classified into two modes. Mode I contains all of those students whose expectations exceed their aspirations. Conversely, Mode II contains students whose aspirations exceed their expectations. For the present analysis each mode is viewed as a variable.

In Mode I, we order deviant respondents on decreasing level of expectation from High to Medium. In Mode II we similarly order on decreasing level of aspiration. Within each mode we have attempted to arrange the respondents in terms of their degree of incongruence. This has been effected through ordering subjects as a function of

FIGURE I ABOUT HERE

their joint score on the two variables. Thus at one extreme we have respondents with High expectations and low aspirations (cell 1). As we move toward congruence we find first subjects with High expectations and Medium aspirations (less deviant than cell 1), and second, subject

with Medium expectations and low aspirations. We argue this is the least deviant case in Mode I because we are ordering in this Mode on decreasing expectations. The converse of the above argument is true for Mode II. Figure I reveals that Mode I contains only 108 subjects whereas Mode II contains 1088 subjects. This difference between the number of students in each Mode is not surprising. For example, both school, family and society in general place high value upon achievement in education. These values inculcated in students through these institutions during the socialization process result in subsequent aspiration for moderate or high levels of education. That this is, in fact, the case is reflected in the marginal distribution on educational aspiration which shows that 83.6% of the total sample have moderate or high aspiration, and expectation.

The following analysis proceeds by determining and comparing the variables which predict variations within each Mode. This is accomplished through the use of stepwise linear regression.*

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*We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Dalhousie University Computer Centre.

Analysis

In order to describe the deviant cases which make up the modes of incongruence we have regressed a number of sociodemographic and social psychological variables against each of the deviant modes. It must be noted that this analysis makes no claim to explaining incongruence. Rather, the analysis is descriptive in nature and is aimed at extracting the characteristics associated with these hitherto unanalyzed groups.

Table II presents a summary of our stepwise regression analysis of each deviant mode.

TABLE II ABOUT HERE

In this analysis only five variables are common to both modes (Grade level, SES, importance of success, mental health, and importance to get ahead). Of these five variables, grade level and mental health both are negatively related to both modes of incongruence. On the other hand, for Mode I the higher the SES, and the greater the importance of getting ahead the greater the degree of incongruence, while for Mode II the obverse is observed.

When we compare, generally, the characteristics of the incongruents in each of our two modes we observe rather sharp differences. These differences are reflected not only in the particular variables which enter the equation

for each mode but also in the summary "picture" which results from an aggregation of these variables. The more incongruent in Mode I terms the individual is, the more he seems to manifest counter cultural values. The Mode II incongruent seems rather more like a vocationally oriented type of student.

Summary and Conclusion

The primary conclusion of this analysis is that the so-called "deviant cases" do exist, and in fact comprise a reasonable large proportion of our cases. Furthermore, it appears, from our analysis that there are in fact two types of deviant case (Mode I and Mode II in our terms). These two conclusions strongly suggest that future attempts to predict and explain students educational achievement should take into account the complex nature of educational horizons. Any future study designed to predict and explain educational achievement employing educational horizon variables should clearly distinguish between those students whose aspirations and expectations are incongruent, and the congruents.

Finally, given our inability to even describe adequately the deviant cases using variables traditionally employed in educational research we would suggest that analysis need be undertaken on the deviant cases per se.

	MODE I			CONGRUENTS	MODE II		
Expectations	High	High	Medium	$H/_{M/_{L}}$	Low	Medium	Low
Aspirations	Low	Medium	Low	$H/_{M/_{L}}$	Medium	High	High
Cell Value in Table 1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	N=37	N=39	N=32	N=4445	N=381	N=262	N=345

FIGURE 1:ORDERING OF DEVIANT CASES

TABLE II: VARIABLES PREDICTING INCONGRUENCE

Degree of Incongruence in Mode I (* INVERSE)		Degree of Incongruence in Mode II	
Variable Name *	Direction of Effect	Variable Name *	Direction of Effect
Self-Image[1]	+	Plans after High school	-
Frequency of Study	+	Grade Level	-
Importance of Success	-	Parental Desires	-
Teacher Interest	+	Socioeconomic Status	-
Importance of Education	+	Importance of Success	+
School Evaluation	-	Attitude to Higher Education	-
Subjective Achievement	-	Attitude to Teacher	+
Grade Level	-	Mental Health	-
Socioeconomic Status	+	Involvement with school	+
Mental Health	-	Friends Plans after School	-
Cutting Class	+	Importance to get ahead	-
Importance of Getting Ahead	+		
Alienation	+		
Ability to Complete College	+		
R^2=21%		R^2=13%	

* Variables are presented in decreasing order of their relative contribution to explaining the variance in each Mode.

1. Operational definitions of the variables are available upon request.

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